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Congregation of the Mission

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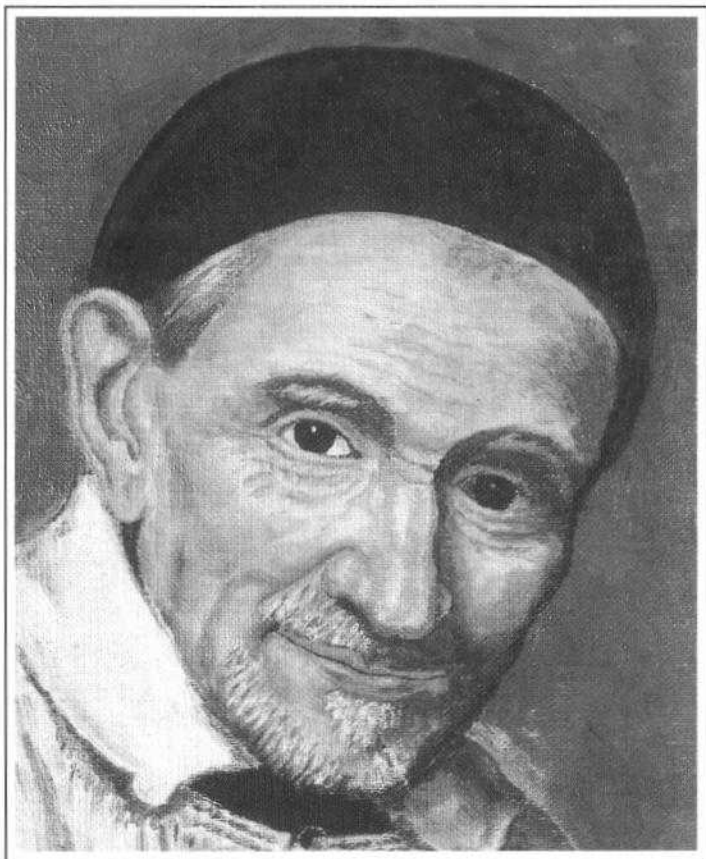
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VINCENTIANA

43rd YEAR, N° 2

MARCH-APRIL 1999



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ips and Persons Associated with the C.M.

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
GENERAL CURIA

VINCENTIANA

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43rd year, N° 2

March-April 1999

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GENERAL CURIA

Lent 1999

*To the members of the Congregation of the Mission
throughout the world*

My very dear Brothers,

May the peace and strength of the Risen Lord be with you in this season!

Lent accents the cost of discipleship. Right from the beginning Jesus cries out: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps" (Lk 9:23). Each Lent Jesus calls us to set out on a journey to Jerusalem, asking us to bear the cross with him. Along the way he speaks to us, through the daily readings, about the deepest meaning of life. Life is easily misinterpreted, he says. In fact, its deepest meaning is often precisely the opposite of what people think. Self-fulfillment comes through self-emptying. Amassing riches can be enslaving; giving them away can be liberating. The last are first, the first last; the poor are the real kings, queens, and presidents in Jesus' eyes. Saving one's life means losing it; we must be immersed into Jesus' death before emerging into the joy of his resurrection.

The grace of following Christ, Lent tells us, is costly. Over the years, in this season, I have often reread a striking passage from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship*, written a few years before he was imprisoned by the Nazi Regime:

Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace.... Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. It is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without Church discipline, communion without contrition, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it someone will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake someone will

pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble. It is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

Let me suggest two thoughts about the grace God offers us as we enter this Lenten time.

1. On the deepest level, grace is neither cheap nor costly. It is utterly free. That is the basic significance of baptism, which the Church celebrates at the Easter Vigil and also offers to countless infants and adults in the course of the year. Baptism says: God loves you from the beginning. The grace it sacramentalizes is God's self-communication. We receive not just gifts, but God's very being. We become the place of the divine in-dwelling. God loves us and we love God in return — that is the meaning of grace.

This gift, Lent assures us, is not merely a future share in the life of the Lord, promised to us now but experienced only later. The gift is ours from the start. It is utterly gratuitous. It cannot be earned. While asceticism is surely necessary in life, as all the great religious traditions attest, we must never allow it, or any other "good works," to blur the central Christian truth: "God has loved us first" (1 Jn 4:10; 4:19). Grace is pure gift. "Otherwise," St. Paul tells us, "grace is not grace" (Rom 11:6b).

Though God is utterly transcendent, do we not experience the self-communication of God at times? Are there not powerful moments in which we sense our own need for healing and redemption? Do we not long for some type of self-transcendence? Looking back at times, do we not perceive that we have been transformed by events that were beyond our control, often by our contact with the poor, by their faith, their gratitude, their persistent trust in God's presence and providence? Are there not "angels" who enter our lives and touch us deeply because of their authentic witness to the gospels, because of their persevering hope in the face of sickness, suffering, and death? Are there not occasions when we are deeply touched by the loyalty of friends, by their faithful love? Are these not ways in which we glimpse God's freely-bestowed presence in our own human experience? I suggest this Lent that we all focus on growing in awareness of God's self-gift, in its many expressions, and raise our hearts and voices to the Lord in gratitude.

2. But, paradoxically, while grace is utterly free, it is also very costly. God's loving presence is cleansing, as baptism and penance (often called in ancient times "second baptism") remind us. God's love labors to break down the resistance that it finds within us. It is a creative love that works toward change, trans-

formation, new beginnings. A good-humored friend of mine, the Master General of the Dominicans, wrote recently:

In the last century, the English upper classes used to dread getting a letter from the King or Queen announcing that they would like to come to stay. You could not just put them in the spare bedroom. Usually you had to pull down half the house, build twenty more bedrooms and install baths. One hostess, who had rebuilt the whole house to receive the King, asked him nervously whether everything was all right, and he replied, majestically, "Madame, I would be grateful of a hook on the bathroom door for my dressing gown."

God wants to make a home within us. Lent emphasizes the need to renovate the woodwork, the electricity, the plumbing. Sometimes a major overhauling is required; sometimes, only subtle refinements.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer summed this all up at the beginning of the *Cost of Discipleship*: "When Christ calls a person," he wrote, "he bids him come and die." Those words were prophetic for Bonhoeffer himself. He was hanged by the Nazis on April 9, 1945, just a few days before the Allied liberation of his prison camp.

The recurring Lenten season nudges us each year toward self-denial. The real point of ascetical practices is not merely to "give up" objects, but to reconstruct one's deepest self so that God might take fuller possession of our home. Jesus asks that the same energy we might have used in accumulating riches, consolidating power, or pursuing personal pleasure be channeled toward the building up of a "new person" as a dwelling place for God. In us who are missionaries, God wants to create not only a home for the divine in-dwelling, but a refuge for the poor. What renovations must we make this Lent for God and for the poor? What must we remove? What must we add? Do we need to rip down some inner walls to provide more quiet prayer space? Do we need to modify a facade that is forbidding-looking, so that the poor will enter more readily?

A millennium and a half ago, John Chrysostom put it this way:

Paint the house of your soul with simplicity and humility and make it splendid with the light of justice. Adorn it with the beaten gold of good works and, for walls and stones, embellish it carefully with faith and generous love. Above all, place prayer on top of this house as its roof so that the complete building may be ready for the Lord. Thus he will be received into a splendid royal home and, by grace, his image will already be settled in your soul.

That is surely wonderful Lenten advice. May your own house, refurbished this Lent, turn out to be beautiful!

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Superior General

January 29, 1999

To all the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear confreres,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ remain always with us!

From January 14-16, we welcomed the heads of some of the principal branches of the Vincentian Family here to the General Curia in Rome. Representatives came from the Daughters of Charity, the AIC, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul, and the Association of the Miraculous Medal. One of the themes which we discussed was the establishment of a central WWW site for the Vincentian Family.

1. As a first step towards the establishment of that site, we agreed that all the branches of the family would gather the WWW addresses for all the sites already established by members of our family. For that reason I am writing to you at this time. I ask that you send to me in Rome all the addresses of the sites established in your province. Even if you have already communicated this information, would you please send it again, since the Internet is a rapidly changing and fluid medium. Please note that I am not asking for e-mail addresses, just web pages.

When all this information is gathered from the various branches of the family, we will post it to a central site soon after April 1. Our hope is that this first step of gathering all the sites at one place will lead to a next step of growth, but we will move patiently in this regard.

2. As a second step towards the development of this site, the representatives of the Vincentian Family agreed to explore the possibility of finding some talented Internet persons within each membership. And so, I am also asking you to suggest members of your province who have an interest and some experience in the use of the Internet and its development. Any confrere who would be willing to cooperate on the maintenance of the C.M. part of the site could be of help. It may also be possible that there is a member of your province who would be capable of coordinating the whole Vincentian Family site. For either of these roles — as a local coordinator or the overall coordinator — a confrere need not be a professional, but only someone who has some knowledge and a desire to develop this medium. This

service would surely require a number of hours weekly from the confrere, but it would not demand that he move from where he presently lives or works. We would be interested in knowing who such confreres are.

Please send this information to me by February 14 via the Curia e-mail address (md0801@mclink.it) or via fax (if necessary).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Superior General

March 30, 1999

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Brothers,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

St. Vincent was very concerned about the need for missionaries to learn languages. He told the confreres:

Now the diversity of languages is very great, not only in Europe, Africa and Asia, but also in Canada. For we see by the reports of the Jesuit Fathers that there are as many languages as there are tribes. The Hurons do not speak like the Iroquois, nor the latter like their neighbors. And a person who understands one group of Indians does not understand the others.

How then can Missionaries, bearing these differences of language in mind, go throughout the world announcing the Gospel if they know only their own language? (S.V. XII, 26-27).

Today, missionary mobility and the frequency of international meetings make it all the more necessary for confreres to know languages.

1. For that reason, with the unanimous consent of the members of the General Council, in accord with Article 107, 2° of our Constitutions, I am enacting a general ordinance which has the force of law for the Congregation of the Mission; namely, that

**all of our students, during the time of formation,
will study a second language (English, French, or Spanish)
with the goal of being able to understand and speak it.**

This ordinance mandates that those students who know none of the three languages mentioned above will study one, and those students who already speak English, French, or Spanish as their first language will study one of the others as a second language.

Of course, although this ordinance applies only to our students, I want to encourage all confreres to learn languages. They are a wonderful missionary asset. The vast majority of the appeals that we receive for personnel require that a confrere know at least English, French, or Spanish.

2. In our General Council, we made a second decision which we hope will eventually foster greater mobility and mutual understand-

ing. At future international meetings of the Congregation, like the General Assembly of 2004, we will provide simultaneous translation in English, French, and Spanish only, trusting that confreres will, as time goes on, become more and more proficient in those three languages.

I recognize that these two decisions will create burdens for some, particularly for those who must begin to study a second or third language. I trust, however, that what is presently a burden will eventually be a gift for promoting greater mobility and better communication in the worldwide Congregation.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Superior General

International Association of the Vincentian Marian Youth

DECREE OF APPROBATION

CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

Prot. n. P. 53-1/99

D E C R E E

The Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul asked the Holy See for the approbation of the Statutes of the *International Association of the Vincentian Marian Youth*, approved previously under the name of *Association of Children of Mary Immaculate* by the Roman Pontiff, Pope Pius IX, in the rescripts of 20 June 1847 and 19 July 1850, and later confirmed by other measures of the Holy See.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, after having carefully studied the text of the Statutes, by the present Decree *approves and confirms the text* of which a copy in French is conserved in the Archives of this Dicastery.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

From the Vatican, 2 February 1999, feast of the Presentation of the Lord.

Eduardo Cardinal Martínez Somalo
Prefect

✠ Piergiorgio Silvano Nesti, C.P.
Secretary

STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE VINCENTIAN MARIAN YOUTH

IDENTITY

1. The International Association of the Vincentian Marian Youth is the updated form of the Association of the Children of Mary Immaculate which had its origin in the Apparitions of the Virgin Mary to St. Catherine Labouré in 1830.
2. The Association of the Children of Mary was approved by the Sovereign Pontiff Pope Pius IX in the rescripts dated 20 June 1847 and 19 July 1850, and was later confirmed by other decrees of the Holy See.
3. By virtue of the aforementioned rescripts the general direction of the Association falls to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity and to his legitimate successors as Superior General of the two Congregations.

SEAT

4. The International Association of the Vincentian Marian Youth has as its historical center the Chapel of the Miraculous Medal in Paris, France, where the apparitions to St. Catherine Labouré took place. This chapel is a center for prayer and pilgrimage for the members of the Association.

The seat of the International Secretariat (described in Articles 21-23 below) is located in Madrid, Spain.

NATURE

5. The Association is ECCLESIAL, LAY, MARIAN and VINCENTIAN.
 - * ECCLESIAL. The members of the Association commit themselves to live and work actively and responsibly in communion with the members of the Church and its pastors on the local and world level.
 - * LAY. It is an Association mainly of young lay people, within the framework of Lay International Associations of the Faithful (cf. *Canons* 298-329).
 - * MARIAN. The members of the Association commit themselves to the following of Christ. They discover Mary in the Gospel, as model of all believers, accepting in faith the presence of God in

her Son Jesus, listening to and acting on his word. Likewise, they see in Mary, Mother of the Lord, the inspiration that helps them, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk through life in faith and with an effective charity that generates justice.

- * VINCENTIAN. Through its birth in the Family of St. Vincent de Paul, it is inspired by the Vincentian charism and makes of evangelization and service of the poor distinctive characteristics of its presence in the Church. Its members commit themselves to be missionaries, witnessing to the love of Christ by word and work.

MEMBERS

6. The Association is composed of young people and adults, with special attention to youth, according to the request of the Blessed Virgin. The members, single or married, endeavor to live their Marian spirituality, proper to the Association, to work apostolically within the Vincentian spirit, according to the pastoral plans and projects of the Association, and to observe their own statutes.
7. The International Association is made up of National, Regional, Diocesan and Local Associations.
8. The National Associations have their own proper statutes, in accordance with universal Canon Law and with the present International Statutes. The national statutes must be approved by the Director General.

END

9. The contemplation of Christ and attention to the example of Mary shall be the driving force that will allow the Association to attain the following ends:
 - 1° to form the members to live a solid faith in the following of Jesus Christ, the Evangelizer of the poor;
 - 2° to live and pray like Mary in simplicity and humility assuming the spirituality of the Magnificat;
 - 3° to foster, animate and maintain the missionary spirit in the Association, especially through missionary experiences, in particular, among the poor and the young;
 - 4° to prepare the members of the Association individually and communally to collaborate in the Church and society with other pastoral workers, according to the directives of the hierarchy of the universal and local Church.

ACT OF CONSECRATION

10. 1° The Association offers to the youth the Consecration to Christ through Mary as a way of making explicit their baptismal consecration and to make of their life a total gift to God through service and evangelization of the poor, choosing Mary as Mother and model.
- 2° The Consecration to Christ through Mary will be the result of deep knowledge of the Association, of formation within the perspective of faith, and of a serious discernment in the Holy Spirit.

MEANS

11. In order to attain its objectives the Association puts at the disposition of its members all the means it judges convenient:
 - 1° it encourages the interiorization of the Word of God and celebrates it, valuing group prayer and the liturgy because Christ makes himself present in the word, in the Eucharist and in those who pray together;
 - 2° it offers a catechetical formation process for maturing in faith — a process of catechumenal inspiration which has its stages, its objectives and its activities;
 - 3° it makes known to the members what Holy Scripture and the Church say in regard to the Virgin;
 - 4° it promotes the knowledge of St. Vincent, St. Louise, St. Catherine and other witnesses of the Church who lived the Gospel in giving themselves to charity;
 - 5° it offers the members the possibility of serving the poor within their own countries and of acting in solidarity with others on an international level;
 - 6° it promotes sessions for holistic formation, catechetical schools, congresses, assemblies, publications and other means of pastoral and social communication.

GOVERNANCE

I. International Level

12. The Association is a lay Association in the Church. It is governed following the dispositions of universal Canon Law and its own proper statutes.

13. By virtue of a Pontifical concession, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity is the Director General of the Association.

It falls on the Director General to:

- 1° represent the Association in the International Organizations of the Church and with the International President at meetings of the laity;
 - 2° name the Sub-Director General and the General Councillor, after consultation with their respective General Councils;
 - 3° name the members of the International Secretariat after consultation with the International Council;
 - 4° confirm the nominations of the National Presidents, Directors, and Sister Councillors;
 - 5° erect national associations and approve their statutes;
 - 6° convoke, in exceptional cases, the International Council;
 - 7° depose the President, other members of the International Council and the International Secretariat in conformity with *Canon 318, Article 2*.
14. For its own dynamism and direction, the International Association of the Vincentian Marian Youth has, in addition to the Director General, a General Assembly, an International Council and an International Secretariat.

a) *The General Assembly*

15. At least every five years a General Assembly will be convoked with the participation of the International Council, the International Secretariat and two lay people from each National Association. Each National Association may also send its National Director and the Sister Advisor on the national level, who may participate in the discussions but without the right to vote.
16. The objectives of the General Assembly are to:
- 1° elect the International President and the lay members of the International Council, in conformity with *Canon 119*;
 - 2° propose revisions of the statutes approved by 2/3 of the members of the Assembly;
 - 3° study the situation of the Association: spiritual, pastoral, financial, assignment of dues, etc.;
 - 4° study themes in line with the spirit and the development of the Association;
 - 5° approve pastoral plans.

Except for what concerns the revision of the Statutes, all decisions are taken by an absolute majority. If after two ballots the outcome remains equal, the Director General, through his vote, determines the outcome.

b) *The International Council*

17. This is composed of the Director General, the Sub-Director General, a General Councillor of the Daughters of Charity, the International Lay President and four lay members of the Association, elected by the General Assembly. They are the "major officials" (cf. *Canon* 318) of the Association. The International Council shall meet at least once a year. For a quorum, five members are necessary. An absolute majority is necessary before taking a decision.

It is convoked and presided over by the Lay President, or, in exceptional cases, by the Director General.

The functions of the International Council are to:

- 1° propose themes for reflection on the important aspects of the life and activities of the Association;
- 2° assure communication with and between the National Associations by letters, visits, and other possible means;
- 3° evaluate the realization of the projects approved by the preceding General Assembly;
- 4° prepare the following General Assembly;
- 5° study and approve the provisional budget and the annual accounts presented by the International Secretariat;
- 6° assure that the International Statutes are applied;
- 7° request from the Holy See, with the approval of the Director General, the dissolution of the Association;
- 8° attend to the liquidation of goods, according to the norms agreed by the same International Council.

18. Election of the members:

The Sub-Director General and the General Councillor of the Daughters of Charity are appointed by the Director General of the Association, after consulting their respective General Councils.

The lay members are elected by the General Assembly, giving appropriate attention to geographical representation.

19. Term of office:

The mandate of the Sub-Director General and of the General Councillor shall be for five years, with the possibility of being renamed for another mandate, but not beyond.

The President and the other four lay members shall exercise their office for five years, with the possibility of being reelected for five more years, but not beyond.

20. The powers of the International President, besides the specific functions in the International Council and the International General Assembly, are to:

- 1° convoke, in agreement with the Director General, the meetings of the General Assembly;
- 2° represent the International Association, together with the Director General or his delegate, at the National and Regional Meetings of the Association;
- 3° maintain relations with the other groups of the Vincentian Family and other lay movements;
- 4° plan his/her activities with the International Secretariat and the International Council.

c) *The International Secretariat*

21. It will be composed of at least two persons, for whom this is their principal occupation; they will animate the programs outlined by the International Council and the General Assembly. They are appointed by the Director General, after consultation of the International Council.

22. The term of office is five years, with the possibility of being reappointed for another mandate.

23. The functions of the International Secretariat are to:

- 1° promote the vitality of the Association;
- 2° be the bond among the different Associations on the international level;
- 3° provide information about the life of the Association;
- 4° receive notification of the nominations at National level, as well as of each new associations;
- 5° organize and implement on the international level the meetings and other activities that the Director General or the International Council judge opportune in order to promote spiritually and apostolically the life of the Association;
- 6° keep up-to-date the archives of the Association;
- 7° present to the International Council a provisional budget at the beginning of the year and accounts at the end of the year.

II. National Level

24. In order to erect a National Association, the approval of the Association and of its Statutes by the Director General is required.
25. The National Association has its own proper statutes in conformity with universal Canon Law and the present International Statutes.
26. The said National Statutes establish the particular norms appropriate for the country with regard to the organization of the members, their rights and obligations, and the apostolic work that the Association proposes to accomplish.
27. The National President, the National Director, and the Sister Advisor at the National Level are appointed in the manner determined by the proper statutes. Their appointments must be confirmed by the Director General.
28. The other appointments to the different offices of the Association are made in conformity with the Canon Law of the Universal Church and the proper statutes. The term of office of these officers is determined by the proper statutes.
29. The National Director shall inform the International Secretariat about the appointments made in his country.

III. Local Level

30. In order to start a new group or center of the Association, the approbation of the National Director is required as well as the written consent of the competent ecclesial authority, in conformity with common and particular law.
31. The National Director shall notify the International Secretariat about the creation of every new association.

IDENTIFICATION SYMBOL

32. The identification symbol of the International Association of the Vincentian Marian Youth is the Miraculous Medal.
33. Every National Association is free to adopt other symbols, in its own country, without suppressing the Miraculous Medal.

FINANCIAL ASPECTS

34. The International Association of the Vincentian Marian Youth is a not-for-profit organization.
35. The International Secretariat gives an annual account of its income and expenses to the International Council.

36. In order that the International Secretariat can function properly, every National Association shall pay dues determined by the General Assembly.

DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION

37. The International Council, with the consent of the Director General, can petition the Holy See for the dissolution of the Association.
38. The International Council shall assign the people to liquidate the Association's goods, according to the norms set by the same International Council.
39. The remaining goods, once all obligations have been fulfilled, shall be utilized for the poor of the place where the Association is situated.

THE APPROVAL AND AMENDMENT OF THESE STATUTES

40. The General Assembly can propose amendments or changes to these statutes and present them to the Holy See for approval.

My Hopes for the Congregation of the Mission over the Next Six Years

by Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Superior General

A number of years ago, as I began my first mandate as Superior General, I expressed my hopes for the Congregation in the years ahead. Thanks be to God, with the generous cooperation of members of our family throughout the world, a number of those hopes have become a reality.

Today, in my first year of a new mandate as Superior General, I offer you my hopes for the next six years. I want to do this humbly, since only God knows the future and, as it unfolds, God often reveals to us unexpected things. When I spoke six years ago, for example, I hardly mentioned the Vincentian Family, but it now holds a very important place in our consciousness. But while recognizing how limited our human vision is, I also express my hopes today with confidence because I believe that God walks with us and because I trust that with your help and that of other members of our Vincentian Family we can make many of our dreams a reality.

Of course, I am eager for us to continue the projects we have begun over the last six years: our new international missions, CIF, new forms of communal prayer, the use of new means of communication, and so on. I have already spoken about these many times. The hopes that I express today flow largely from the General Assembly of 1998 and from some initial reflection on that Assembly.

1. *I hope that we can, together with the members of our worldwide Vincentian Family, become a united force, an army (so to speak), in the evangelization and integral human promotion of the poor.*

During the General Assembly the members of our family presented us with 20 recommendations. I will not repeat them all here. Let me mention the four loudest calls that I heard in these recommendations.

1. I heard a call for coordination on local, regional, national, and international levels. Different words are used to describe the coordinating structure. Sometimes it is called a team, sometimes a committee, sometimes a secretariat. But there is a clear call to create coordinating instruments for channeling our common energies. Internationally, the heads of many of the principal branches of our family have been meeting regularly for the last four years. I hope that such regular meetings will now be organized on the national, regional, and local levels.
2. I heard a repeated call for mutual help in formation. The members of our family want to deepen their spirituality. They want to understand St. Vincent better and his vision of Christ and of the world. They judge that this is one of our family's greatest needs and they recognize that we can help each other in satisfying that need. Recently I asked a confrere and a married lay woman to collaborate on a book about Vincentian spirituality in the lives of lay men and women. Members of various branches of the family will join with the authors in a retreat to offer them suggestions for concretizing this spirituality.
3. I heard a call for greater communication within the family, through sharing publications that already exist, through creating new ones perhaps, through the use of media like the Internet. I will return to this theme later when I speak about Internet.
4. I heard a loud call, even a cry, for collaborative projects in various parts of the world, to attack the needs of the poor. Last year we published in *Vincentiana* six collaborative projects being realized on various continents. I hope that in every country where our family lives such collaborative projects, with the participation of all the branches, will soon be realized.

I hope that we can respond to these four calls.

2. *I hope that we can enrich our formation programs throughout the Congregation of the Mission on all levels.*

The General Assembly addressed this question very directly and made commitments:

- a) to the initial and ongoing formation of our own members;
- b) to the formation of our own formators;
- c) to the formation of the wider Vincentian Family.

I have many hopes in this regard. Let me just mention three.

1. I hope that we can assist our own formators to be masters and guides in the spiritual journey. It is most important that our formators be rooted experientially in the mystery of God's love so that they can help our candidates to share profoundly in that

same mystery. The mission of the Congregation is, after all, to announce this mystery joyfully. The good news is that God is alive, that he lives within us, that he works among us, and that he has a special love for the poor. Our formators play a crucial role in helping all of us to become immersed in this mystery. My hope is that the Congregation can assist them to plunge more and more into its depths.

2. I hope we can establish regional centers for the Vincentian formation of our formators. I want to encourage all of the Visitors' conferences (CLAPVI, ASPAC, COVIAM, the European Visitors, the USA Visitors) to organize such regional centers, where our formators might be able to come together, for example, once a year for several weeks for study, for sharing of experiences and concerns as formators, for an experience of community living and prayer together.
3. I hope that we might be able to assist other branches of our Vincentian Family in developing better formation programs. As I mentioned earlier, I hear this call for help repeatedly. Our lay branches (especially AIC, the youth groups, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul) continually encourage us to offer such assistance. This often demands hard work, creativity, and the preparation of attractive materials, even books, that will assist others in their formation. The challenge too is to disseminate these materials broadly so that they reach those at the base. There are millions of lay members in our family. How can such formation materials reach them all? That is the key challenge. My hope is that we meet it.
3. *I hope that the "newer provinces" — those of Africa, the Asian-Pacific region and Latin America — might continue to grow in inculturating the Vincentian charism, and that the "older" provinces — those of Western Europe and North America in particular — might generate new life as smaller, more focused, and more flexible bodies.*

The Congregation is growing rapidly in Africa, in the Asian-Pacific region, and in many countries of Latin America and is diminishing in numbers in the United States and Western Europe. I hope for the full inculturation of the Vincentian charism in the "new provinces" and a revitalization of the charism in the "older provinces."

The leitmotif of holiness was striking during the Synod for Africa, the Synod on Consecrated Life, the Synod for Asia, and the Synod for the Americas. The message of the African Synod states that holiness is the aim and true fruit of inculturation. Holiness involves authenticity, integrity, coherence between what we say and how we live, especially in regard to the vowed life. In other words, when we preach solidarity with the poor, we must also live in solidarity with

the poor. When we exhort others to a simple life style, we must live simply ourselves. When we speak of obedience, we ourselves must be quick to listen, quick to obey the signs of God's will. When we say that we are celibate, we must live celibacy genuinely. Our love for God and for his people must be profound and also fruitful; it must be evident that we have many sons and daughters whose life in God we seek to nurture daily.

Authenticity, integrity, coherence (or what St. Vincent called "simplicity") must be the sign of Vincentian holiness wherever the Congregation is truly inculturated.

Here in Europe there are very promising signs of growth in the East, with expansion into the former Soviet Union. In Western Europe and the United States, however, the number of vocations has diminished very significantly and the median age of the confreres has risen dramatically. I admire the efforts made in these provinces to reevaluate their apostolic works, to create new forms of community living, and to revitalize our common prayer. I want to encourage the Visitors and all the members of these provinces in a difficult task. I say to each member of these provinces today: do not lose heart. I am deeply confident that the Lord is with us, that he loves the poor, and that the charism of Vincent de Paul is immensely attractive as a way of reaching out to the poor. I urge you to be creative in engaging others in the practical, effective charity for which our founder is so noted. Engage them at the same time in St. Vincent's deeply evangelical spirituality. Help them to see Christ the evangelizer and servant of the poor as the center of their lives.

4. *I hope that we can make our Vincentian voice heard clearly before international organisms like the United Nations and the European Community.*

We have much to learn from the AIC in this regard. The work done at their center in Brussels can be a model for us.

As you know, in December 1998 we were officially recognized as a Non-Governmental Organization which has the right to participate in various committees at the United Nations. This new form of service to the poor is about to begin. I am eager that we make our Vincentian voice heard at the UN on important social issues like poverty, hunger, education, health care, and human rights.

5. *I hope that we might develop a creative "ratio missionum" that will be of service in the missions ad gentes sponsored by the provinces and in the new international missions under the care of the Superior General.*

This was one of the specific commitments made by the recent General Assembly.

More concretely, what I would hope for is an overall mission plan, drawn up by experienced confreres, that will offer guidelines for broad-scale evangelization within a mission and at the same time for integral human promotion. The unity between evangelization and human promotion, so important to St. Vincent, has become a key-stone in the social teaching to the Church today.

To implement this, we recently named a commission to begin drafting the *Ratio*. Its members are: Victor Bieler, Antonius Sad Budianto, Jorge Homero Elías, Dominique Iyolo Iyombe, Hugh O'Donnell, Ángel Santamaría. The committee met in early January and has now sent out a questionnaire seeking input from all confreres.

6. *I hope that we might use modern means of communication creatively in the service of the poor and in channeling our energies on issues of justice and peace.*

The General Assembly of 1998 committed us to establishing a worldwide communication network, in cooperation with the wider Vincentian Family, and to use it not only for fostering our own formation and the dissemination of information within the Family itself, but also to find ways of making this tool immediately accessible to the poor.

At our meeting of the heads of some of the principle branches of our family held in Rome on January 14-16, 1999, we decided to open such a family page. We hope that it will start up by the beginning of April this year. The beginnings will be modest since much work needs to be done within each of the branches of the family and also in all of our own provinces. Recently I wrote to all of our Visitors asking for a list of all the web sites within the Congregation of the Mission and for the names of any confreres in their provinces who would be interested in collaborating in the development of our family page. Collaborators can work on this project several hours a week right in their own houses, without needing to move.

I hope that this page can be a conversation place where we can inform one another on issues of justice and peace and unite our energies toward concrete goals.

7. *I hope that MISEVI will spread to other countries.*

Our General Assembly asked that we work together, *as a family*, in the missions *ad gentes*. I am happy to say that when the Province of Colombia offered to open a new mission in Rwanda, it said that it would be a mission *of the family*.

Recently, after two years of consultation, I submitted MISEVI's International Statutes to the Holy See for approval. This new member of our family has as its goal the sending of lay men and women

to the missions *ad gentes*. MISEVI provides for their formation, their apostolic placement, their community setting, their economic sustenance, their human and spiritual support system, and their eventual reentry into their homeland.

I hope that this Association, which exists now mainly in Spain, will soon spread to other countries.

8. *I hope that we can encourage young people to join our already-existing Vincentian lay groups (like the Vincentian Marian Youth groups, AIC and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul) and that we can also form other Vincentian groups in the service of the poor.*

Recently the General Council completed a study, on which all of us enjoyed working, since we found it interesting. The study is entitled "On Associating Groups and Persons with the Congregation of the Mission." It has now be sent to the Visitors and will soon be published in three languages in *Vincentiana*.

This study, in its conclusions, offers many concrete suggestions about groups and persons who might be linked with the Vincentian Family, like teachers, doctors, nurses, students in our schools, etc. I would hope that we can foster Vincentian associations that will offer such persons a share in our spirituality, our prayer, our bonds of friendship, and our apostolic mission.

9. *I would hope that we can increase the funds that we are building up for our missions and for formation.*

Here let me begin by thanking the Visitors and the individuals who have been marvelously generous in contributing to the International Mission Fund: 2000, which we began in 1995 and which is steadily growing. Next year we will begin to use the interest from that fund for the poor and for the formation of those who will serve them.

When St. Vincent established works, he always tried to provide an economic base that would guarantee their future. The purpose of IMF: 2000 is precisely to establish such a base. I will continue to appeal to the Visitors and to the confreres to help this fund increase, since the Congregation is growing fastest precisely in those places where its economic resources are most meager.

10. *I hope that we can become a family that prays mightily and beautifully.*

Do people say of us: "Those Vincentians really know how to pray!"? People surely know our family for its works. The name Vincent de Paul is synonymous with works of charity. Many bishops also spontaneously think of the Congregation of the Mission when the topic of formation is on the table. But do people see us as a group

that is deeply committed to prayer? Do the young people who come among us feel attracted by experiencing how we pray?

St. Vincent himself was a wonderful pray-er. His contemporaries readily recognized him as a contemplative in action. He put great emphasis on mental prayer but he also asked us to attune ourselves to the rhythm of the Church's liturgical life and to celebrate it beautifully.

My hope is that we can support one another in meditating daily and fruitfully and that our common liturgical prayer will, as I have often stated, be "something beautiful for God" and attractive to the young. I am about to write to the entire Congregation in this regard.

Jürgen Moltmann wrote recently:

The mystics — especially the women mystics — have repeatedly described the closeness of God as... flowing waves of energy. Surrounded, flooded and interpenetrated by divine streams of energy, body and soul awaken like flowers in the spring and become fruitful — that is, they themselves become life that gives life.... People touched by the Spirit will pass on the energies of the life that gives life, and apparently not only from soul to soul, but through their bodies too. The bodily zones that radiate energy are the glowing face, the shining eyes, the speaking mouth, the play of features and the gestures which show affection and commitment. It is these which supply and charge the metaphors for the life-giving, stimulating and electrifying closeness of God in the Spirit.¹

I hope that our family will radiate God's life. Within our family we are surrounded, as the author of Hebrews puts it, "by a great cloud of witnesses."² They radiate energy: Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, Catherine Labouré, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Frederick Ozanam, Rosalie Rendu, Justin de Jacobis, John Gabriel Perboyre, and countless others. I hope that many of us will be like them, filled with God's life, filled with love of the poor, radiant witnesses from whom God's energy flows.

¹ JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN, *The Life of the Spirit*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1992, pp. 275-276.

² Heb 12:1.

1998 ANNUAL STATISTICS - CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

MINISTRIES

Number of confreres involved in the ministries listed below. Each confrere is counted only once, considered under his principal ministry.

MINISTRY	PRIESTS	PERMANENT DEACONS	BROTHERS
1. Parish (popular) Missions to the faithful	121		4
2. Missionary parishes or districts	270		3
3. Parishes	819	2	20
4. Pilgrimage sanctuaries	60		7
5. Seminaries and clerical formation	181		3
6. Formation of our own exclusively	171		10
7. Missions Ad Gentes	144		6
8. Daughters of Charity (Director, chaplain)	134		
9. Schools (primary, secondary, superior, professional)	213	1	17
10. Social Communications (publications, radio, television)	31		
11. Special studies	101		1
12. Chaplains: military, immigrants, hospital, associations	184		4
13. Chaplains: Vincentian Lay Groups	48		
14. Direct Service of the Poor	28		9
15. Manual work	9	1	57
16. Administration	138	1	12
17. Retired, ill, convalescing	318		28
18. Absence from the Congregation	102		4
19. Other	92	1	7
TOTAL	3164	6	192

PROVINCE	HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS BY PROVINCE - 1998							ADMITTED MEMBERS AND ASPIRANTS BY PROVINCE - 1998											
	Houses	Bishops	Priests	Permanent Deacons	Brothers	Students with Vows	TOTAL	ADMITTED MEMBERS					ASPIRANTS						
								P*	PD*	CP	CB	TOTAL	Voc. Grps.		Minor Sem.		Prep. Yr.		TOTAL
													TP	TB	TP	TB	TP	TB	
General Curia	6		7				7												
AFRICA																			
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	6		35		1	2	38			19	2	21	15	2			8		25
Ethiopia	5	2	27		1		30			21		21			29				29
Madagascar	8	1	68		4	4	77			26	7	33					5		5
Mozambique	6	1	14		2	1	18			3		3	12	1	14				27
Nigeria	6		33		1	5	39			6		6	5				10		15
St. Justin de Jacobis	6		32		1	9	42			9		9			35				35
NORTH AMERICA																			
Mexico	21		81		3	6	90			9	1	10			28				28
Eastern (USA)	24		184		12		196			2		2	1				6		7
Midwest (USA)	17		128		18		146			1		1							0
New England (USA)	8		33		4		37					0							0
Southern (USA)	5		30		1		31					0							0
West (USA)	11		49	2	3		54			2		2					1		1
CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA																			
Argentina	10		45	1			46			7		7	8				5		13
Curitiba (Brazil)	9	3	64		3		70			30		30	167		22		5		194
Fortaleza (Brazil)	3		31			7	38			1		1	13				6		19

Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)	8	4	73		9	6	92			20		20	20	2	18	1			41
Central America	11	5	37		3	2	47			9	4	13	22	2	1	1	1	1	28
Chile	6		25				25			4	3	7	5						5
Colombia	22	2	139		13	9	163			29	1	30	190	5	26				221
Costa Rica	6		22		2	3	27			3		3	2						2
Cuba	4		11			1	12					0	3	1			2		6
Ecuador	6		27			7	34			9		9					6		6
Peru	12	1	50		1	2	54			18	1	19	5				3		8
Puerto Rico	14		55		2		57			17	4	21			25				25
Venezuela	14		61		1	1	63	1		2		3	12	3		3			18

ASIA

China	5	1	43		1		45			3		3	3						3
Northern India	11	1	64		4		69			20		20			29				29
Southern India	9		49		2	3	54			8		8			46				46
Indonesia	11		75				75			52	1	53					4		4
Orient	9	Pat	41		3	1	46			3		3			16		6		22
Philippines	13	1	70		5	10	86			19	1	20					18	1	19

EUROPE

Austria	5		17		4		21			1	1	2							0
Belgium	3		9				9					0							0
Paris (France)	20		110		9	3	122			41	3	44					3		3
Toulouse (France)	15		77		9	4	90			2		2							0
Germany	5		13		2	1	16			1		1							0
Hungary	3		15		1	3	19			2	1	3			1	1			2
Ireland	17		91				91					0							0

PROVINCE	HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS BY PROVINCE - 1998							ADMITTED MEMBERS AND ASPIRANTS BY PROVINCE - 1998												
	Houses	Bishops	Priests	Permanent Deacons	Brothers	Students with Vows	TOTAL	ADMITTED MEMBERS					ASPIRANTS							
								P*	PD*	CP	CB	TOTAL	Voc. Grps.		Minor Sem.		Prep. Yr.		TOTAL	
													TP	TB	TP	TB	TP	TB		
EUROPE continued																				
Naples (Italy)	13	1	58		3	1	63			1		1	5						5	
Rome (Italy)	9	1	61	1	3		66			1		1							0	
Turin (Italy)	14		92	1	5		98			1		1	2						2	
Netherlands	6		67		3		70					0							0	
Poland	31	3	257		5	8	273			39	6	45							0	
Portugal	11	1	52		2	2	57			5		5	67		3		3		73	
Slovakia	7		29		3		32			27	2	29	3				3	1	7	
Slovenia	9	1	47		4	2	54			4		4	1						1	
Barcelona (Spain)	10		51		2	1	54			4		4	8						8	
Madrid (Spain)	19		136		17	2	155			2		2			70				70	
Salamanca (Spain)	22		98		11		109			2		2							0	
Zaragoza (Spain)	21		127	1	4	3	135			2		2			3				3	
OCEANIA																				
Australia	10		54		5		59			10		10							0	
TOTAL	562	29 + Pat	3164	6	192	109	3501	1	0	497	38	536	569	16	366	6	95	3	1055	

P* = Priests; PD* = Permanent Deacons; CP = Candidates to the Priesthood; CB = Candidates to the Brotherhood; * Priests or permanent deacons coming from a diocese or another Institute; TP = Aspirants to the Priesthood; TB = Aspirants to the Brotherhood.

Appointments and Confirmations by the Superior General

DATE	NAME	OFFICE	PROVINCE
07/12/98	Jean-Yves Ducourneau	SIEV member	
22/12/98	Julio Suescun	SIEV member	
22/12/98	Julián Alonso Santamaría	Director D.C. (2° mandate)	Peru
23/01/99	Weldemariam Zerajohannes	Vice-Visitor (2° mandate)	Saint Justin de Jacobis
01/02/99	Richard Devine	C.M. Representative to the U.N.	
02/02/99	Gerardo Castillo	Vice-Visitor	Costa Rica
10/02/99	Mario Di Carlo	Director D.C.	Rome
16/02/99	Józef Łucyszyn	Visitor	Hungary
03/03/99	Bernard J. Quinn	Visitor (2° mandate)	U.S.A. West
08/03/99	Thomas F. McKenna	Visitor	U.S.A. Eastern
10/03/99	Jorge Homero Elfás	Superior of the Mission	El Alto (Bolivia)
29/03/99	Girmay Abraha	Director D.C.	Ethiopia
01/04/99	Chacko Panathara	Superior of the Mission	Mbinga (Tanzania)
06/04/99	Victoriano Torres	Director D.C. (2° mandate)	Japan
12/04/99	Pierre Causse	Director D.C.	Marseille
17/04/99	Gonzalo Martínez Salame	Visitor (2° mandate)	Ecuador
19/04/99	Patrick Harrity	Director D.C. (2° mandate)	Evansville
22/04/99	William Hartenbach	Visitor (2° mandate)	U.S.A. Midwest
23/04/99	John Wang	Visitor	China

FEATURE

On Associating Groups and Persons with the Congregation of the Mission

by Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Superior General

I. Status Quaestionis

In its Provincial Assembly, held October 20-24, 1997, the Province of Toulouse addressed a postulatam to the General Assembly of 1998 and another to the Superior General. Both postulata asked that we reflect on how married deacons might have some juridical bond with the Congregation of the Mission.¹

The General Assembly did not address the substance of this question. Rather, it passed it on to the Superior General and his

¹ The postulata read as follows:

1. To the General Assembly

Un bon nombre de diacres mariés, dont certains sont des Conférenciers de Saint Vincent de Paul, manifestent le désir d'un rattachement plus étroit à la Congrégation de la Mission.

L'Assemblée Provinciale demande à l'Assemblée Générale de prendre ce désir en considération et d'y réfléchir.

2. To the Superior General

L'Assemblée Provinciale demande au Supérieur Général de faire étudier par des Confrères engagés dans divers ministères et par des canonistes éprouvés, Lazaristes ou non, les modalités pratiques qui permettraient à des diacres mariés d'être unis par quelque lien juridique officiel à la Congrégation.

council, leaving them complete freedom to do as they saw fit. Since the subject interested all the members of the council very much, we decided to carry out the study. Over a period of several months we discussed this theme in four lengthy council meetings while consulting canonists, confreres, superiors general, twelve religious communities,² and members of two dicasteries of the Holy See.

It became immediately evident that the issue is much larger than the possible linkage of married deacons with the Congregation of the Mission. Requests for some type of bond with the Congregation of the Mission come to us frequently from many lay groups and individuals, both male and female, of differing backgrounds and interests. This study will treat the broader question of associating various groups and persons with the Congregation of the Mission; in that context, it will also respond to the postulata of the Province of Toulouse.

Actually, the Congregation of the Mission has a long history of varied forms of linkage with many groups: the Daughters of Charity, the Ladies of Charity, the Miraculous Medal Association, the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, etc. The juridical models used in the past in relationship with these groups can provide light for future possibilities.

The reflections that follow are not merely juridical, nor are they merely theoretical. All those consulted attest that it is important to learn from contemporary practice and that there is much fluidity in regard to this question at present. This study, therefore, offers norms and suggestions gleaned from current experience within the Church.³

² I am very grateful to the members of the General Curia, who visited these communities and conducted interviews, using a questionnaire that we had devised beforehand.

³ With so much rapid development in regard to this question, there are many *quaestiones disputatae* today in regard to Church law concerning associations. The Holy See has mandated a study regarding such questions (e.g., the erection of private and public associations).

II. Some Presuppositions

1. This document does not treat "affiliation," which is used in the Congregation as a means of acknowledging our gratitude towards certain persons or groups and of assuring them of our spiritual union with them. "Affiliation" creates no juridical bonds between the Congregation of the Mission and other groups or persons. In recent years we have "affiliated" many individuals, some married couples, and a number of groups (e.g., 14 congregations of Sisters of Mercy of St. Vincent de Paul).

2. The new Code has a well-developed section on "Associations of Christ's Faithful" (*Canons* 298-329) and other canons related to linking associations with Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Among the most important canons influencing the theme of this document are: 303, 311, 677 and 725.

3. The canons make it evident that both groups and individual persons can be associated with a congregation by some form of bond (cf. *Canons* 677, § 2, and 725). The law speaks of associations "aliquo modo unitis" (*Canon* 311) and also of persons and associations who are united with us "aliquo vinculo determinato" (*Canon* 725).

4. While juridical bonds with the Congregation of the Mission, usually through linkage with the Superior General, have an important place in the functioning of many groups, such bonds are not essential for having a "Vincentian identity." The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, for example, has no such bonds; nor does the present-day International Association of Charities (AIC).

5. What is written below focuses mainly on the association of groups with the Congregation of the Mission. It is applicable, however, to the association of individuals, *mutatis mutandis*.

6. This study treats the association of new groups with the Congregation of the Mission. It is, of course, very important that relationships between the Congregation and already-existing groups within the Vincentian Family be continually strengthened. In recent years a renewed sense of "family" has developed among us, resulting in closer personal ties, common prayer, frequent meetings, cooperative planning, and collaborative projects in the service of the poor. Strengthening the common bonds that unite the various groups in our family, while preserving their distinctive charisms, is crucial for the vitality of the charism of St. Vincent.

III. Some Theological Roots

The 20th century has witnessed a renewed emergence of the laity in the Church. Three theological developments have played a crucial role in this regard:

- a) Reflection on the Church as the "people of God" has highlighted the co-responsibility of all its members for the life and vitality of the Church.⁴
- b) In that context, the universal call to holiness has received new emphasis.⁵
- c) Likewise, because of a recognition that mission is not merely an activity of the Church but part of her very essence, contemporary theology has placed a renewed accent on the involvement of every Christian in the Church's mission.⁶

Numerous conciliar⁷ and post-conciliar documents⁸ have treated these three themes.

Actually, during the history of the Church, lay groups and religious institutes have had a profound mutual influence upon one another. Early forms of religious life sprang from the desire of lay persons to live Christianity radically. The eremitic life, the monastic life, and the mendicant life all had significant lay roots.⁹

On the other hand, religious life has given birth to numerous lay groups, from the long-existing third orders to the many contemporary apostolic and missionary lay associations. There have been various models of linkage between lay associations and different religious families.¹⁰ For example,

- a) The older male and female religious institutes often founded lay third orders approved by the Church. Their membership became quite numerous. Such groups focused particularly

⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, 9-17.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 40.

⁶ *Redemptoris Missio*, 71-74.

⁷ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2-4; *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 2-7.

⁸ *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 1, 18; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15, 59-60; *Christifideles Laici*, 16, 51.

⁹ Cf. MARCELLO ZAGO, "Laici Associati nell'Odierno Contesto Ecclesiale," in *La Vita Consacrata*, coll. "Studi e Saggi su: ...," Conferenza Italiana Superiori Maggiori, Roma 1997, pp. 201-215.

¹⁰ For abundant bibliography on this question, cf. GIANFRANCO POLI, "Religiosi e laici: osare la svolta," in *Vita Consacrata* XXXIII, n. 6, Novembre-Dicembre 1997, pp. 648-653. Actually, every issue of *Vita Consacrata* contains information on new forms of community living.

on the spirituality of the founders of the institutes. Notable among these are those of the Franciscans and Carmelites.¹¹

- b) Institutes whose goal is the mission *ad gentes* have, especially in more recent years, often founded lay associations that collaborate in mission countries. The institutes offer lay missionaries a program of formation prior to being sent out and a period of service in a foreign country. The lay missionaries work in close relationship with or are even inserted within the community itself, and agree to a clear set of norms (even a contract) governing their life, mission, and material needs. Notable among these would be Maryknoll's lay volunteer groups. MISEVI (Misioneros Seglares Vicentinos) is another example.
- c) Teaching institutes or other communities with very precisely defined apostolic goals, like health care, have formed associations of lay collaborators that share in the vision, the spirituality, and the charism of the founder; they also participate in the institute's particular apostolic work. The Jesuits, for instance, have a large association of alumni from their schools.
- d) International apostolic institutes with many "relatives" (groups living in the spirit of the same founder) have emphasized a sense of "family." The members of the family share the spirituality of the founder, participate in a similar apostolic vision, join in concrete missionary projects, and develop forms of shared formation and mutual support. Among these, besides our own Vincentian Family, are the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Pallotines.
- e) A fifth group of institutes have, flowing from their charism, a continuous history of lay formation and collaboration with lay groups. The Salesians are perhaps the clearest example, having close links with lay associates right from the time of Don Bosco, who composed a rule for them himself.
- f) Today "new Foundations"¹² exist, sometimes composed of clerics and lay persons, of men and women, of married couples and celibates. Such groups have a variety of juridical configurations. Their commitment to the evangelical life takes different forms and is usually characterized by an intense focus on community, prayer, and simplicity of life. The members, including the married couples, are in some instances offered the opportunity to pronounce the vows of

¹¹ There are many other third orders; e.g., Dominicans, Augustinians, Minims, Mercedarians, Servites, etc. Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 54.

¹² Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 62; also, 12, 54-56.

chastity, poverty, and obedience in forms appropriate to their state of life.¹³ At times, other vows are added.¹⁴ Examples of such "new foundations" are *Verbum Dei* founded in Spain in 1969,¹⁵ the Community of the Beatitudes founded in France in 1973,¹⁶ and the Oasi della Pace founded in Italy in 1985.¹⁷

IV. Lines of Convergence

Examining the various forms of linkage between lay associations and religious institutes or Societies of Apostolic Life, certain lines of convergence emerge.

1. Various studies¹⁸ attest that young people, in associating themselves with institutes, seek three things in particular:

- a) *Spirituality*. They long for a world-view that makes sense and is comprehensive and life-giving.
- b) *A sense of belonging*. They want to face the challenges of the future *with others*. This *communitarian dimension* shows itself in different ways in the relationship between lay associations and religious institutes. Sometimes it is expressed in team work, with the members of the lay association working side by side with members of the institute. At other times, it takes the form of regular meetings, praying with one another, sharing meals from time to time, or even living together.
- c) *A well-defined apostolic mission*. They seek a mission that involves a concrete response to dire human need.

¹³ Cf. *Vita Consacrata*, 62.

¹⁴ Members of the Oasi della Pace, for example, take a vow "to be peace and to intercede for peace."

¹⁵ JUAN MARTÍNEZ SAEZ, "Fraternità 'Verbum Dei'," in *Vita Consacrata* XXXIV, n. 1, Gennaio-Febbraio 1998, pp. 87-97.

¹⁶ "La Comunità delle Beatitudini compie 25 anni," in *Vita Consacrata* XXXIV, n. 6, Novembre-Dicembre 1998, pp. 647-657.

¹⁷ "Comunità mariana 'Oasi della Pace'," in *Vita Consacrata* XXXIV, n. 2, Marzo-Aprile 1998, pp. 181-196.

¹⁸ DAVID NYGREN - MIRIAM UKERITIS, *The Future of Religious Orders in the United States*, Praeger Press, Conn. 1993, p. 251; ALBERT DI IANNI, "Religious Vocations. New Signs of the Times," in *Review for Religious* 52, # 5, September-October 1993, pp. 745-763; cf. CATHERINE BERTRAND, "Common Threads Are we Weaving Or Unraveling?"; MARCELLO ZAGO, *op. cit.*

2. The particular *charism* of the institute plays a crucial role in all linkage.¹⁹ At times, varying aspects of the charism come to the fore; e.g., the spirituality of the founder, his missionary approach, a style of life he proposed, etc. For instance, in the relationship of a lay association with a missionary institute, the emphasis might lie on collaboration in missionary works. Contemplative institutes and their lay associates might focus more on prayer. Mendicants and their third orders might accent lifestyle. Groups associated with the Jesuits have often stressed the Ignatian Exercises and a method of discernment.

3. Today there is considerable emphasis on *families*, whose different branches — male and female, lay and religious — complement one another in underlining the importance of spirituality, communion, and mutual cooperation in concrete projects. Our own General Assembly of 1998 placed great emphasis on this theme. The Palotines, who held their chapter shortly after ours, focused on the same topic.

4. The *lay* character of most such associations is continually reaffirmed today. It is essential that lay associations not be “clericalized” or dominated by the religious institute. As lay members seek to share in the charism of a religious founder, it is very important that the founder’s spirituality and insights be translated into forms that are applicable to the life of a lay person.

5. There is strong emphasis, gleaned from experience, on the need to respect the autonomy of both the lay association and the religious institute. Each has its own statutes, its own leaders, its own decision-making process, etc.

6. All stress that *economic* questions must be treated clearly in the statutes of the lay association and in whatever documents define the linkage between the association and the religious institute.

7. The *formation and admission* of associates must be a serious process. There should, therefore, be a carefully designed period of formation²⁰ and some type of official request for admission that is

¹⁹ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 54-56.

²⁰ The spirituality of an association linked with the Congregation of the Mission might rest, typically, on these pillars:

1. the following of Christ as Servant and Evangelizer of the poor;
2. concrete, effective charity lived out in simplicity and humility;
3. a well-defined commitment to daily prayer (e.g., some vocal prayers accompanied by a period of mental prayer, with a method of meditating);
4. mutual concern for and support of one another.

The formation program of such an association might include instruction in regard to basic New Testament spirituality (Jesus and the proclamation of

evaluated and approved by some person or group. In the case of married persons, the consent of the spouse is utterly necessary. If contracts are involved, then they should clearly stipulate matters like the period of time for the person's service, economic arrangements, etc.

8. The *organizational structure* of associations is very varied. Sometimes they are restricted to a local area, sometimes to a country, and sometimes they are international.

9. A *statute* or *rule* is eventually formulated, describing the goals, the spirituality, the process of admission, the commitments of the members, the apostolates, and the organizational structure of such groups. Many groups such as those associated with the Salesians, the Pallotines, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Spiritans, the Society of St. Paul (Paolini), and the Society of African Missionaries (SMA) have statutes that are already approved or in the process of approval.²¹

V. Some Principles for Linking Groups or Persons with the Congregation of the Mission

One might envision three cases: *a)* uniting an already existing association "*aliquo vinculo determinato*" to the Congregation of the Mission; *b)* creating an association and then uniting it to the Congregation; *c)* linking an individual person or several persons to the Congregation of the Mission "*aliquo vinculo determinato*."

1. In all three cases, it is important to verify that the association or person has:

- a)* a well-defined Vincentian spirituality;
- b)* a clearly defined mission to the poor, either through direct service or through some other form of material or spiritual support;

the Reign of God, the call to conversion, mission, practical charity, forgiveness of others, faith, trust in providence, dedication to truth, mortification, etc.) and instruction in, and experience of, the Vincentian charism. It would offer to others a Vincentian apostolic spirituality as the foundation for serving the poor well and an understanding of the social teaching of the Church.

There would ordinarily be a well-defined process of formation before formal entrance into the Association. Normally this would take place over an established period of time, at the conclusion of which members would be formally admitted.

²¹ Cf. *Canons* 312-314.

- c) some form of clearly defined means for communal support, through prayer, meetings, team work and other social interchange;
- d) a local point of contact (e.g., a local Vincentian advisor, or a relationship with a center at or near a house of the Daughters of Charity or the Congregation of the Mission, etc.);
- e) the possibility of various kinds of participation; e.g. part-time or full-time, single or married;
- f) a clear understanding of the distinction between membership in the association and membership in the Congregation of the Mission, each group having its own juridical identity;
- g) clear norms in regard to financial sustenance (e.g., defining how needed funds are raised).

2. Members of such associations, or individuals, might make basic commitments:

- a) to the service of the poor (e.g., a certain amount of time weekly);
- b) to daily personal prayer, and perhaps to some defined times of prayer together with other members of the group;
- c) to meetings for communal support, ongoing formation, and decision-making in regard to works among the poor.

3. Further optional commitments might be encouraged, if individuals should wish to engage in them (e.g., a private vow of service to the poor, a private vow of chastity, etc.). Such private vows might be annual and could be dispensed by a confessor.

4. It is also possible to envision, especially for young people, temporary commitment to some form of common life.

VI. Formulation of Statutes

1. Eventually an Association formulates statutes that are approved by some authority within the Church, as outlined in *Canons* 303 and 312. In distinctively Vincentian associations, this authority is initially the Visitor, for his own province, and ultimately the Superior General.

2. The members of an Association are not in any way juridically "members" of the Congregation of the Mission. There should exist, however, strong bonds between the members of the Congregation of the Mission and those of the Association. The Vincentians might assist the Association by:

- * helping in the initial and ongoing formation of their members;
- * offering counsel at their meetings;
- * providing service opportunities within the context of our works;
- * praying with the members of the Association;
- * sharing other moments of life with them.

VII. Putting These Reflections into Practice

1. Much will depend on the creativity and hard work of those engaged in the initial dialogue concerning this question (e.g., a particular confrere and the group of lay people who wish to be associated with the Congregation of the Mission). Many Superiors General attest that people often express a desire for some form of union, but frequently the desire remains vague and nothing happens because of a failure to work at the question perseveringly and concretely.

St. Vincent offers a good example of perseverance and concreteness in such matters. He wrote careful statutes for the confraternities of charity that he founded. Through patient labor he gained approval for the rather revolutionary rule of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

2. The first step is to sit down with the person or group of people who express a desire for some type of bond with the Congregation of the Mission and to ask the question: Precisely what is it that you are seeking? Do you desire to be united with us in our apostolate? in our prayer? through some type of participation in some aspects of our community life? if the latter, what aspects? how often? etc.

All of this should be written down very clearly and specifically. Whatever is ultimately done must have as its starting point the actual desires of the people who want to enter into some form of bond with the Congregation.

3. It is important, from the start of the dialogue, to avoid confusing two distinct realities: *a*) the association (or person) that is linked "*aliquo vinculo determinato*" to the Congregation of the Mission; and *b*) the Congregation of the Mission itself.

4. All financial responsibilities must be clearly described in writing. Lay associations should have their own way of financing their activities. The Congregation of the Mission must not be envisioned as being responsible for their finances nor liable for the actions of their members or the families of the members.

5. A good recent example of how the four steps outlined above might be implemented can be found in the Statutes of MISEVI. This association, which provides the opportunity for lay Vincentian missionaries (single or married) to work in various countries over a period of years, had its international statutes approved by the Holy See on April 7, 1999. It now functions effectively, with a distinctively Vincentian spirituality and with well-defined bonds to the Vincentian Family.

6. Among the possibilities at times suggested is that a Vincentian lay associate would take vows; e.g., a vow of service to the poor. If one examines this possibility with a group or an individual, then it seems best to speak of a private vow. There should be a very concrete description of what such a vow involves, its duration, and how it can be dispensed.

7. One of the ways of linking associations with the Congregation of the Mission, without confusing the two realities, has been through the person of the Superior General, who has served as the Director General of the association. This is the model already used in many groups; e.g., the original Ladies of Charity (though the juridical status of AIC is now different), the Miraculous Medal Association, the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, MISEVI, etc. Analogously, St. Vincent and St. Louise used a similar formula in linking the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission, both Societies of Apostolic Life, as members of a family with many common ties.

VIII. The Linkage of Married Permanent Deacons with the Congregation of the Mission

Much of what has been said above throws light on the postulatium addressed by the Province of Toulouse to the Superior General asking him to promote a study investigating the ways in which married deacons might be united by some juridical bond with the Congregation of the Mission.

Actual requests for such linkage have been relatively few up to the present, but could increase in the future. When a missionary receives such a request, the following steps are appropriate:

1. He should dialogue with the deacon or group of deacons and ask questions such as those described in the preceding section (cf., VII, 2). The results of this conversation should be written down. Without careful dialogue with a view toward discerning precisely what the married deacon (or group) desires, the process will go nowhere.
2. When a clear statement has been drawn up expressing what the married deacon desires concretely in terms of linkage with the Congregation, then this should be presented to the proper authority; e.g., to the Visitor and perhaps later to the Superior General, so that a statute might be carefully formulated describing the kind of linkage being sought and the mutual rights and responsibilities of the married deacon and the Congregation of the Mission. While a married deacon may not be incorporated as a member of the Congregation of the Mission, other forms of linkage are quite possible. For incorporation, the vows of the Congregation are necessary (C 57), as well as a commitment to community life (C 21).
3. Since permanent deacons are incardinated into a diocese, the mutual responsibilities of the bishop, in whose diocese they are incardinated, and the Congregation of the Mission, with which they seek some form of bond, should be utterly clear.
4. As mentioned above (IV, 7), the consent — and preferably the encouragement and support — of the deacon's spouse is a prerequisite.
5. For linkage of *individual deacons*, a clear contract should be drawn up describing the rights and obligations of the individual and those of the Congregation of the Mission, and the time frame for the agreement. Such a contract might touch on such matters as formation, apostolate, prayer, communal support, meetings, relationship to authority, and economic arrangements.
6. If the number of married deacons seeking some type of bond should grow significantly, one might think of creating an association with an international statute that could be applied within different countries. Such a statute could be developed out of the experi-

ence of actual instances of linkage in various countries over a number of years.

IX. Future Possibilities

St. Vincent was both creative and well-organized, mobilizing the energies of many persons and groups in the service of the poor. In concluding this study, I encourage the members of the Vincentian Family to engage in similar inventiveness.

Below, I suggest a few possibilities. There are surely many others that readers might envision.

1. Thousands of lay men and women work at the side of Vincentians and Daughters of Charity in educational works that are directed to students of all age levels, from pre-school children right up through the university. Recently many materials have come across my desk that relate to these persons and institutions. In October 1997, a meeting at Curitiba in Brazil focused on the topic: "Educa-dores Vicentinos No Contexto Mundial." In 1997, Sr. Louise Sullivan, D.C., published a work entitled "The Core Values of Vincentian Education."²² The confreres at St. Stanislaus' College in Bathurst, Australia, formulated in 1996 a document entitled "Vincentian Philosophy of Secondary Education." The Vincentians and Daughters of Charity of Spain have circulated a brochure entitled "Propuesta Educativa de los Centros Educativos Vicencianos." Our Vincentian universities also have documents describing the meaning of Vincentian sponsorship of those institutions. Could an association be formed for our collaborators in education, offering them a Vincentian spirituality, apostolic goals, prayer forms, etc?

2. A huge number of lay men and women, including many doctors and nurses, work side by side with Daughters of Charity in health care institutions. Many of these institutions have written eloquent statements about their Vincentian mission. These same institutions often struggle to be faithful to that mission in an era where health care legislation has increased the danger of bureaucratic and impersonalized hospital procedures. Could one envision a group of "Vincentian Health Care Associates" that would see the sick-poor with St. Vincent's eyes, love them with his heart, and serve them in his spirit?

3. MISEVI, mentioned above (VII, 5), provides a workable model for sending volunteers (men and women, single and married) to for-

²² This study was published by DePaul University, 1 East Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60604-2287.

eign missions. At present its members come mainly from Spain. Could other countries adopt similar statutes and provide lay men and women with the opportunity to serve from three to five years in a mission country in the Vincentian spirit?

4. In various countries, the Congregation of the Mission has centers for training lay leaders (e.g., the Centro Hector Gallego in Volcán, Panama, where a large number of pastoral ministers are formed). They are often the principal pastoral agents in villages or in Basic Christian Communities. These leaders sometimes have no formal tie with a diocese or with any other group. Could an association be formed called "Vincentian Pastoral Agents" that would offer such lay men and women a Vincentian spirituality, pastoral perspective, etc.?

5. In some countries, both in the past and in the present, some lay men and women have lived in our houses for a period of time, even their whole lives, and performed generous service without aspiring to become formally "members" of the Congregation of the Mission or of the Daughters of Charity. Various names (e.g., los donados in Spain) describe such persons. Recently I received a letter from India asking whether a group of women like these could be more formally linked with the Daughters of Charity. Could some kind of statute be drawn up for such persons?

6. With some frequency, a single person or a married couple present themselves and are eager to give a significant portion of, or all, their time to the service of the poor. Could a statute be drawn up, entitled "Vincentian Associates," which would state, *mutatis mutandis* in different countries, what might be offered to such individuals or couples and what might be expected from them? The statute could, ultimately, be written in the form of a contract for the individual person or the couple.

7. Today lay men and women, single and married, often cooperate with us in the giving of popular missions. Could such persons be linked more formally with the Congregation of the Mission, offering them the opportunity to share more fully in our spirituality?

8. Sometimes employees, alumni from our schools, and former seminarians remain closely united with the Congregation and express a desire to have closer bonds. Could some form of linkage be offered to them?

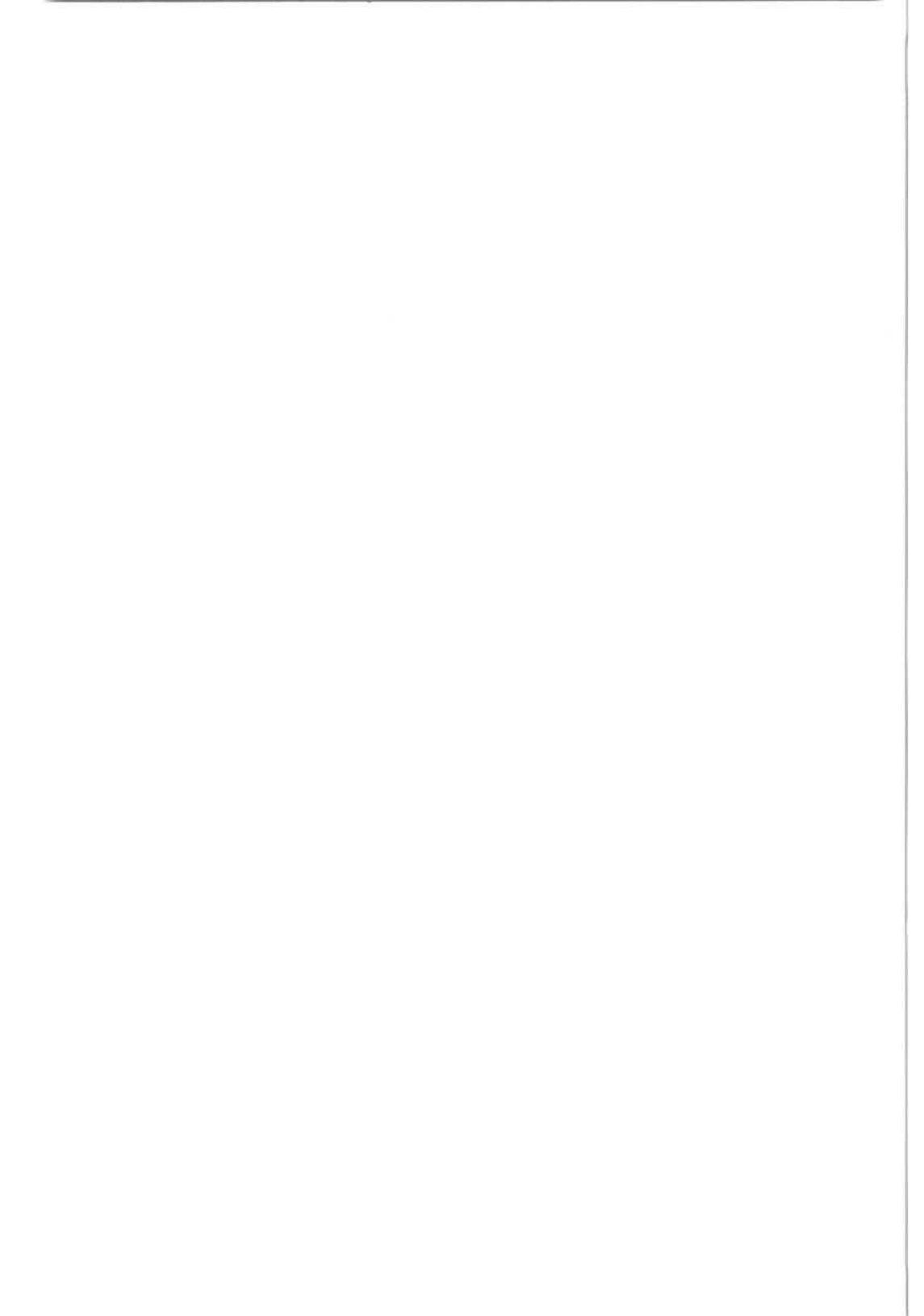
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Of course, when possibilities such as these are raised, one might immediately think of many problems. The civil law today often creates complications, particularly in the area of liability. This makes the careful drafting of statutes and the obtaining of good legal advice indispensable, so that the Congregation and those linked to it are adequately protected under civil law.

Financing the life and mission of lay associates is surely also a very delicate consideration.

Such problems might discourage us initially, but it is helpful to note that St. Vincent faced similar difficulties. In his day, the canonical obstacles might have seemed almost insuperable as he attempted to form the Daughters of Charity into an apostolic society, especially since his friend Francis de Sales had recently failed in his efforts to free the Visitation nuns from the cloister. But with patience, St. Vincent worked out a viable legal solution. He also worked out solutions for the financial support of the many works that he undertook.

I hope that we can be similarly creative today!



STUDY

Five Faces of Mary

by Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Superior General

We know very little about the Virgin Mary, though the little we know is tantalizing. She played, of course, a crucial role in the story of Jesus and has had an enormous influence in the history of Christianity. The major creeds profess that Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary." Mary's impact on Christian piety has been powerful. She is the first among the saints to whom we unite our voices in prayers of praise and petition. Is there any prayer that has been said more frequently than the Hail Mary?

On the affective side, Mary has come to symbolize maternal listening for countless people, becoming for them, as a modern writer puts it, "an icon of the tenderness of God."¹ On the level of moral response, Christians, reflecting on the New Testament, regard Mary as the ideal disciple, the first among the saints.

Her influence has deeply affected art, music, and poetry. We need only to recall some of the striking paintings of the Virgin Mary, like the Madonnas of Botticelli, of Lippo Lippi, of Murillo. And of course we have all often heard wonderful Ave Marias like those of Schubert and Gounod, as well as countless other Marian hymns. Dante, Shakespeare, and many others all wrote beautiful poetic tributes to the Virgin Mary.

But perhaps nowhere has Mary flourished so much as in the popular imagination. A recent author speaks of the thousand faces of the Virgin Mary.² In this brief article I will present five of these faces. I encourage the reader not just to reflect on the few words that I

¹ MARIA CHIARA STUCCHI, "La Bellezza e la Tenerezza di Maria in 'Vita Consacrata,'" in *Religiosi in Italia*, # 300, May-June 1997, pp. 81*-88*.

² Cf. GEORGE TAVARD, *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary*, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1996; cf. also, JAROSLAV PELIKAN, *Mary Through the Centuries*, New Haven, Connecticut, 1996.

write, but also to meditate with me on these faces. Paintings, icons, mosaics and images created within our own minds and hearts have a way of speaking that goes beyond words.

I. Miriam of Nazareth

I have chosen to represent Miriam of Nazareth, the lovely "Virgin and Child" of Murillo (1617-1682). But beautiful as it is and much as I like it, I recognize that its Virgin is surely more European than the historical Miriam of Nazareth. Though we do not know what Miriam actually looked like, Murillo's painting portrays her union with her son, something which is central in the biblical texts that describe her, and the deep serenity that flowed from it.

With this first image, we reflect on the Mary of history of whom we know so tantalizingly little. Let me try to express the little that we can say historically of the Virgin Mary.



Mary was actually called Miriam, after the sister of Moses. She was born probably in Nazareth, a small village of about 1600 people, almost all of whom were Jews. If she was not born there, she at least lived much of her life there; her son came to be called "the Nazarene," as stated in the inscription placed above his head on the cross. Her birth took place most likely between 20 and 15 BC. She, Joseph, and Jesus lived in territory occupied by a foreign power, the Romans, whom many Jews hated. The atmosphere was often tense.

Her husband, Joseph, and her son, Jesus, were woodworkers.³ The language that she and they spoke at home was Aramaic, though perhaps she also understood a little Hebrew from hearing it read in the local synagogue services. She may also have understood some Greek phrases; they would have been helpful in the woodworking business since many of the merchants at that time in that area of the Roman Empire were Greek-speaking.

³ Cf. Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55.

Like mothers of that and many other eras, she would have breast-fed her child, cooked meals regularly, and done lots of house-cleaning and washing. She would have carried water home from nearby wells or streams. Of course Mary too, like most mothers, would have taught her son to walk, to talk, to pray, and to do many other things.

Women in Palestine in that period were rarely given the opportunity to study, so it is likely that Mary did not know how to read or write. Her learning came orally through family traditions she imbibed at home and from the reading of the Scriptures, along with homilies, that she heard in the synagogue.

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were poor, but, since Joseph had a trade, they were probably no poorer than most Galileans of their time.

Joseph seems to have died before Jesus' public ministry began. Mary herself, however, was alive throughout that ministry.⁴ Her separation from Jesus as he began his ministry was probably painful for her. Mark tells us that Jesus' family thought him mad⁵ and that Jesus resisted a request of his family to see him.⁶ She was present at his crucifixion. At that time she would probably have been around 50 years of age herself. She lived on at least into the early days of the Church.⁷

What does this first face say to us? It says that Mary was rooted in real life. She was one of us. Like most women of her time, she was hardworking, had little formal education, and was rather poor. She was a deeply believing Jew whose faith was nourished by the word of God which she heard in the synagogue. She loved and nourished her child and her husband. She kept house. She probably helped in the carpenter shop from time to time. She may well have experienced some confusion when her son left the shop and set out on an extraordinary ministry. She must have known joy at his successes and she certainly felt anguishing sorrow when he was condemned as a criminal and put to death. All of us can identify with that kind of life. It was not easy. Nor was it very glorious. Yet it had a noble beauty about it.⁸ Mary was so real that people of every age have felt that she understands their joys, their needs, their sorrows.

⁴ Mk 3:31; Jn 2:1-12.

⁵ Mk 3:21.

⁶ Mk 3:31-35.

⁷ Jn 19:25; Acts 1:14.

⁸ For historical data about Mary, cf. JOHN P. MEIER, *A Marginal Jew*, New York 1991, esp. pp. 253 ff.; also, RAYMOND E. BROWN - KARL P. DONFRIED - JOSEPH A. FITZMYER - JOHN REUMANN (eds.), *Mary in the New Testament. A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*, Fortress Press and Paulist Press, Philadelphia - New York 1978, pp. 28-29.

II. The Listening Disciple

Here I have chosen a 15th century icon from Moscow called "The Mother of God of Tenderness." In this type of icon, of which there are many examples, the Mother listens attentively and sadly while the son reveals to her his passion and death. The icon captures a prominent New Testament theme.

While the modern world is very curious about history, the New Testament writers were much more interested in *meaning*.

The Scriptures often give just a few basic historical facts about a person — not enough to satisfy our modern curiosity — and then focus on the meaning of that person's life for us who are believers. For the Scriptures, Mary is the ideal disciple, the model listener. She hears God's word and acts on it. This theme is most explicit in Luke's gospel. In Luke's first two chapters Mary is evangelized by Gabriel, by Elizabeth, by the shepherds, by Simeon, by Anna, and by Jesus himself. All of them proclaim the good news of God's presence and sing in praise of God's goodness. Luke tells us that Mary kept all these things in her heart, turning them over and over again.⁹

Mary's response to what she hears from Gabriel is typical: "Be it done to me according to your word."¹⁰

Luke sums it all up in a lovely little story:¹¹

His mother and brothers came to be with him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. He was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you." He told them in reply, "My mother and my brothers are those who listen to the word of God and act upon it."



⁹ Cf. Lk 2:1-9; 2:51.

¹⁰ Lk 1:38.

¹¹ Lk 8:19-21.

This theme, Mary as the Listening Disciple, has often been overshadowed by other more exalted Marian titles. But it is an extremely important one. In fact, it lies at the core of New Testament spirituality: all disciples, like Mary, are called to listen to the word of God attentively and act on it.

What can we learn from this second Marian face? We can learn to listen. There is almost nothing more important that Mary can teach us. At root, being a disciple means being a *hearer of the word*. The whole of Christian life can be summed up in the Lucan phrase that describes Mary so aptly: "She listened to the word of God and acted on it."

III. The Mother of God

This high theological nativity scene, with its trinitarian motif, comes from an artist of the School of Bologna, which flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries. The painting reflects many themes from the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke: God's Providence, the Spirit, the angels, Joseph's dreams, Mary's peace.

Mariology has known its ups and downs. Mark's gospel and some of the early Fathers of the Church show little interest in it. Luke and John, on the other hand, emphasize the role that Mary played in the history of salvation. But Mariology took a striking leap when, in the year 431 at the Council of Ephesus, Mary was declared "Mother of God." This is surely the most glorious of the Marian titles.

It is not, however, simply a Marian title; it was intended as a reaffirmation of Jesus' divinity. This title was a reaction to the Arians of the 4th and 5th centuries who denied the divinity of Christ. The Church responded by stating clearly: Mary is not just someone who gave birth to a deeply spiritual, human person, Jesus; rather, the Council of Ephesus affirmed: Mary gave birth to the one who *is God* in the flesh.

We repeat this title again and again in the Hail Mary. The icons of the Eastern Church, where this title was born and where it was proclaimed at Ephesus, depict Mary with the Divine Child in her womb or at her side blessing the world. In mosaics, we often see her



beside the Risen Lord in glory. Important as this title is, it is easy to misunderstand. It has known a long history of controversy. In this ecumenical age, it is essential to recall that to proclaim Mary as the Mother of God is to profess our faith in the divinity of Jesus. In that sense, this Mariological title is profoundly Christological.

What can we learn from this third face of Mary? We can learn that her role was singular. She was the Ark of the Covenant, so to speak, the dwelling place of God. Her relationship with the person of Jesus is unrepeatable; she was his mother. He is flesh of her flesh. Yet the poor have always noted, as Mary herself sings in Luke's gospel, that God chose her from among *them*.¹² The New Testament and the long tradition of the Church teach us, moreover, that Mary's unique relationship with God, in her son, flows not from her physical relationship with him, but from her first conceiving him in faith. Chosen from among the poor, Mary's intimate union with God came from her saying: "Be it done to me according to your word." For the poor she is a sign of hope. In her, they see the lowly raised up, and they are confident that, with her help, their sorrows can be turned to joy and even death can give way to life with the Risen Lord. In Mary, they recognize that the surrender of themselves to God's action allows God to be born anew in them and in their world.

IV. Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal

This 19th century statue of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal stands above the main altar in the sanctuary at Rue du Bac in Paris.

You may ask why I have leaped 14 centuries from the Council of Ephesus in 431 to the apparition at the Rue du Bac in 1830. I choose Rue du Bac for three reasons: first, it can be representative of other apparitions because it shares significant common elements with them; secondly, the Miraculous Medal has millions of devotees throughout the world; third, it has had a very prominent place in the heritage of our own Vincentian Family.

One must, of course, be very cautious about apparitions. Reports of these are abundant. In France alone, Mary was alleged to have appeared in at least 21 locations between 1803 and 1899; many of these appearances have long been forgotten. Between 1928 and 1971, there were 210 claims of apparitions at various places throughout the world. The Church's experience has taught us to be very slow about paying undue attention to such events. But some, like the devotions centered at Rue du Bac, Lourdes, and Fatima,¹³ have received a form of official approval and encouragement.

¹² Cf. Lk 1:46-55.

¹³ PELIKAN, *op. cit.*, lists ten apparitions as having received some form of ecclesiastical encouragement. Cf. pp. 178-179.

With all apparitions, believers should be very aware of two basic principles:

1. Only the Scriptures, as interpreted in and by the Church, are God's public revelation; apparitions do not add new revelation necessary for our salvation. The heart of Christian faith always lies in listening to the word of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, and acting on it, as did the Virgin Mary.

2. Apparitions, the messages they bear, and prayers evoked by them belong to the realm of private devotion. They are a way of concretizing and expressing our faith. As private devotion, the more closely related they are to the central mysteries of our faith, the more helpful they are.



Often, apparitions state, in popular form, a message that concretizes Christian faith or morals as rooted in the Scriptures. They say dramatically: be converted, seek peace, contemplate the suffering love of Jesus, pray faithfully and mightily, imitate Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Of course, all those messages are already stated clearly in the Scriptures. In that sense, apparitions are not necessary for our salvation. No one is bound in faith to believe in them. Their popularity waxes and wanes. But they occur repeatedly because the popular imagination needs to be captured and all of us need to be reminded.

St. Catherine Labouré's visions in 1830 gave popular expression and powerful impetus to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception which Pius IX proclaimed two decades later in 1854. Surely without Catherine Labouré Christians throughout the world would never have prayed so often: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Rue du Bac continues to draw believers — millions of them annually in fact — to reflect on the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, on her graced union with the Lord, and to ask Mary, the first among the saints, to pray with us in our need.

The medal, moreover, has always had a special appeal for the poor, the humble. More than one billion medals were made even in St. Catherine's lifetime, spreading to the remotest corners of the

world. The people themselves gave it the name "Miraculous Medal." Born in an era of rationalism, the medal proclaimed the need for symbols to express faith, love, commitment. Struck in an age that sought scientific explanations for everything, the medal proclaimed God's provident loving care for all human persons.¹⁴ The symbols on the medal were, in fact, a graphic catechesis about God's love and concern for his people.

What does this fourth Marian face teach us? It reminds us that Mary is free from sin, the most perfectly redeemed of God's creatures. She is the first among the saints. And it encourages us, within the communion of saints, to unite our prayer with hers in our need, trusting deeply in God's provident love for us. In a special way, it is a symbol for the poor, evoking their trust that God listens, even if the world does not.¹⁵ Apparitions like that of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal remind us that God's loving concern needs to, and continues to, find popular human expression in the world, especially through the mystics and the saints.

V. The Black Madonna

The famous icon, which arrived in Czestochowa in 1382, has a long, important history in Polish piety.

Of the thousand faces of Mary why is this one my final choice?

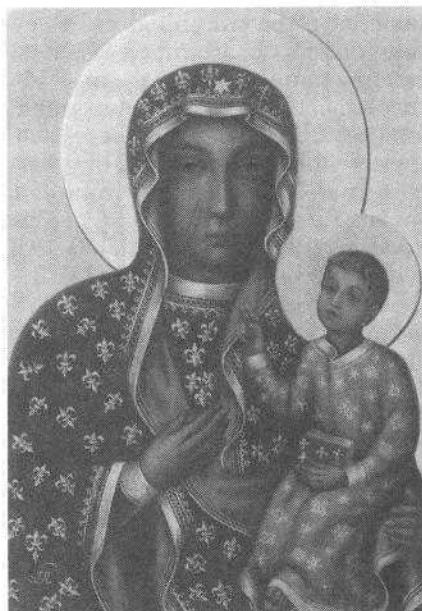
The reason is simple. Today Church documents talk again and again today about inculturation. It has been the theme of the general chapters of numerous missionary communities. Christian faith is very malleable and the Christian imagination is very creative. Consequently Marian devotion has been inculturated countless times in countless cultures. Recently I saw a painting of an Indonesian Virgin Mary at a seminary in Java. I have seen Chinese Virgins, Filipino Virgins, African Virgins. All have seen Our Lady of Guadalupe and perhaps many other Latin American Virgins.

There is something wonderfully paradoxical about all this. Intellectually, we know that Mary was a poor Jewish woman. She was not black nor did she have Chinese or Indian features. We know too of course that she did not wear the elaborate European robes in which Murillo and Lippo Lippi painted her. Her features were probably very much like those of Jewish or Palestinian women living in that area

¹⁴ JOHN PRAGER, "María de Los Pobres, una relectura de la Medalla Milagrosa desde la periferia," in *CLAPVI* XXIII, N° 96, July-December 1997, pp. 171-179.

¹⁵ Cf. RENÉ LAURENTIN, *Vie de Catherine Labouré*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1980, and *Catherine Labouré et la Médaille Miraculeuse - 2. Procès de Catherine*, Congrégation de la Mission, Filles de la Charité, Dessain et Tolra, Paris 1979.

today; her clothes were those of the poor. We know all of that with our heads. But popular imagination has always wanted to bring Mary closer and closer to us, and so it has shaped her to the features of the believing community. She is our mother, so the black has loved to see her black; the Indian has loved to see her Indian; the European, European; the Chinese, Chinese; the Mexican, Mexican. In fact, Octavio Paz once stated: "Our Lady of Guadalupe has been a sign in which each epoch and each Mexican has read his destiny."¹⁶ Mexicans call her "la Morenita," a term of endearment for the dark Virgin whom they love so much.¹⁷



The "multi-cultural Mary" receives special inspiration from the words of the bride in the Song of Songs: "I am black and beautiful."¹⁸ This theme flourished in Northern Africa and Ethiopia, as well as in Asia Minor; there are black Madonnas too in France, in Brazil, and in many other countries. The most famous "Black Madonna," the celebrated icon at Jasna Góra in Czechochowa has become a central symbol in Polish popular devotion. Ironically, the blackened face of the Virgin in that icon was the result of smoke, not of skin color, but its darkness has symbolized for Poles the suffering that Mary bore heroically, hoping against hope. Because of Mary's universal appeal, she has become a powerful force for liturgical and artistic inculturation,¹⁹ taking on local dress and skin-color effortlessly.

What can we learn from this fifth face of the Virgin Mary? We can learn to be creative and sensitive to cultural differences. "The

¹⁶ Octavio Paz, as quoted in JACQUE LAFAYE, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe. The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531-1813*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1976, p. xix.

¹⁷ V. ELIZONDO, *La Morenita. Evangelizadora de las Américas*, Ligouri, St. Louis 1981.

¹⁸ Sg 1:5.

¹⁹ SALLY CUNNEEN, *In Search of Mary*, Ballantine Books, New York 1996, pp. 172 ff.

poor have the true religion," St. Vincent de Paul once wrote.²⁰ Their religious forms are much less heady than those of us theologians. Of course, popular religion runs the danger of abuse, but so does my theology. The poor sense spontaneously how important inculturation is. They recognize that the essential thing is not that Mary lived in the territory of Israel and that her skin color was like that of middle-easterners. The essential thing is that she was one of us (whether *us* means European or African or Filipino or Chinese), that she responded affirmatively and wholeheartedly to God's call, that God took hold of her life by being born of her flesh, and that she remained steadfast in faith through life's joys and sorrows. The Black Madonna and many other similar Madonnas make it easier for many to *see* Mary's story as applicable to *any* time, *any* place, or *any* culture.

I offer these five Marian faces as a way of reflecting on the rich, varied tradition surrounding the Virgin Mary. In conclusion, I say to the reader as Jesus said to the disciple whom he loved:²¹ "Behold your mother." Behold her face, and let it speak to you.

²⁰ S.V. XI, 201.

²¹ Cf. Jn 19:27.

LIFE IN THE CONGREGATION

Pentecost on the Manampatrana River

In the wake of the cyclone Gretelle in Madagascar

by Luigi Elli, C.M.

Visitor of Madagascar

You will recall the terrible cyclone which hit the Farafangana area of south-east Madagascar on 24 January 1997, an area where our confreres have an important mission (cf. Nuntia, January 1997, # 4). The article below was published in the July-August 1998 issue of Missione Vincenziana, p. 5. It shows that something magnificent, while totally unexpected, emerged from this catastrophe. God knows how to draw something good from misfortune.

I am writing from Farafangana, the little town on the east coast which was almost completely wiped out at the end of January 1997 by the cyclone Gretelle.

Life has slowly resumed its course. The houses have been repaired or rebuilt. The rice fields have been cleared of sand, and other types of farming have started up again with new enthusiasm. It has been hard, especially in the beginning, but the dark days are now behind us.

I have been on the coast now for two weeks, and tomorrow I return to Fort Dauphin, but will be setting out again after three days. I began my stay on the coast with canonical visitations of our houses in Manakara and Vohipeno, more to the north. Then, last Wednesday, I arrived in Farafangana. Fr. Philippe Chan-Mouïe had asked me

quite some time previously to accompany him on a tour of his bush stations. His ministry is to the stations in the valley of the Manam-patrana, the river which flows into the sea north of Farafangana.

The area of which he is in charge was one of those most devastated by the cyclone, with all cultivation completely destroyed and 90% of dwellings flattened.

Thousands of people were threatened by famine. Thanks to the aid, which the generosity of yourselves and others sent, we have been able to give on the spot assistance. Fr. Philippe, helped by the sisters and some lay people, threw himself into the work with generosity and dedication. Over a period of months rice, maize, milk powder, medicine and clothing have been distributed to the most needy, without distinction of tribe or religion. In the little village of Alamantira alone, and in its surrounding area, 2,800 persons, adults and children, profited from the aid which was sent, and there were no complaints about the method of distribution. After that, attention was directed towards rebuilding dozens and dozens of small dwellings and the bush chapel. By now the distribution of first emergency aid has been suspended; instead reconstruction is going ahead. The Christians themselves have asked that preference be given to rebuilding their churches.

And it is in this that Pentecost has been fulfilled. After the wind of Grettele which flattened to the ground houses and plantations it is the strong wind of the Spirit which is putting people and communities back on their feet.

Hundreds of persons of all ages, amazed by the selfless dedication of Fr. Philippe, whom they did not hesitate to call "our saviour," are asking to be instructed in the Catholic faith. Some people might think that there is something suspicious about such a development. I, personally, do not think so. During the time when food and medicine were being distributed no distinction was made between Christians and Animists, and everyone was given what they needed, and there was no pressure whatsoever to attract non-believers to the faith.

It is now some months since the distribution ended but the impetus of coming to the faith is continuing, like a real epidemic.

I have here in front of me the statistics on catechumens, which I expressly asked Fr. Philippe to provide. One bush chapel serves several parishes in the hinterland, and for ten such chapels 1,910 persons were listed as preparing for baptism, 856 adults and 1,054 children.¹ Among the adults were about 60 couples preparing for marriage as well as for baptism.

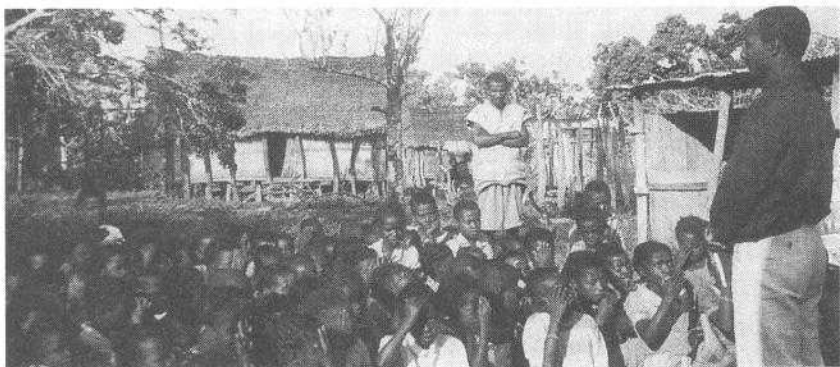
¹ On the feast of the Assumption 1998 about 800 persons, after a very fervent period of preparation, were baptised. And since then, the movement towards conversion to the Christian faith, far from easing off, is continuing regularly in the area.

In three or four places Fr. Philippe had arranged for his Christians to come together and he brought me to meet them. They came in their hundreds to welcome me. This year, apart from the cyclone, almost continual rain during the month of February and the first days of March had breached the rice fields and ruined them. Traditionally 15 March is the last day for transplanting the rice. The people therefore were at this work, and needing to work rapidly. Yet, in their hundreds, they left their urgent task in order to welcome me and thank me for the aid which had been sent to them.

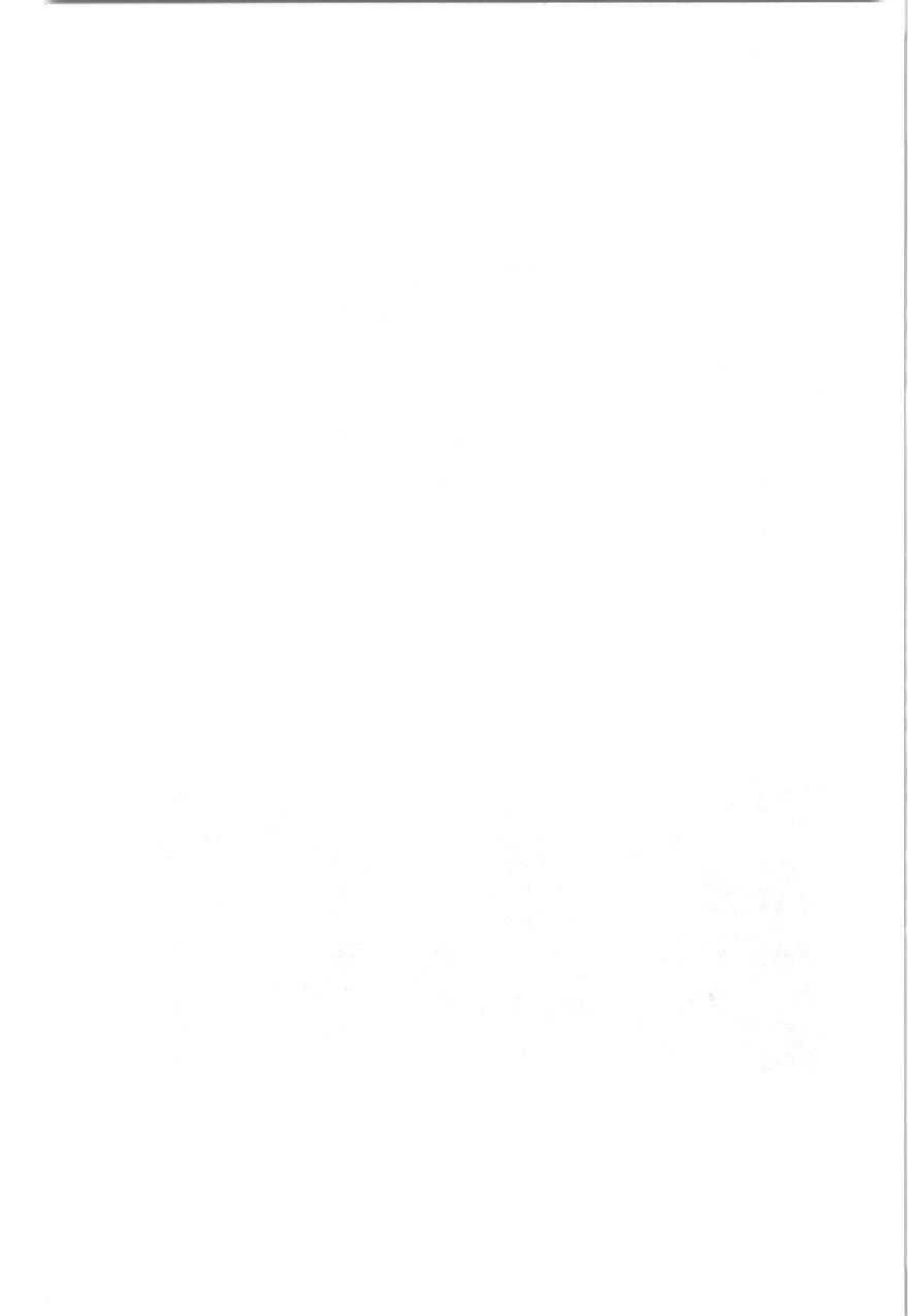
I explained to them that it was not myself personally who should be thanked, but you. I had been only an agent and intermediary, but it was you who, through your generosity, were responsible for getting help through to so many people in difficulty. I told them I would pass on their thanks to you, as I am now doing. You know that, thousands of kilometres away thousands of people who do not know you are saying thanks to you and praying for you. On Sunday all the masses are celebrated for benefactors.

And also it is due partly to you that the Spirit is breathing today on the Manampatrana.

(THOMAS DAVITT, C.M., translator)



The children of Sahaforza study catechism in the open because their church was destroyed by the cyclone; a new church, however, is almost finished.



VINCENTIAN

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Missione e Carità

La Congregazione della Missione nel Settecento

I - Francia e Italia

Published by CLV-Edizioni Vincenziane, Rome, Italy, 1999 (332 pages)

This is an important work which retraces the history of the Congregation of the Mission during the 18th century in France and Italy.

The geographical spheres of research are France, understood as the center of the Congregation and all its French houses and ministries, and Italy, or rather, the Italian States of the period.

The period runs from 1697 to 1788; that is, from Jolly, a man of strong temperament and a remarkably strategic vision, to Pierron, a weak man of no account. We arrive at the eve of the French Revolution.

We are no longer at the fervor and creativity of the origins. French political power extended its hand to the Congregation, confiding to it royal parishes. The Congregation develops more and more in other countries. Many issues have changed as compared with the 17th century. These are all the questions that one will find studied in an in-depth fashion in this work.

ROBERT P. MALONEY, C.M.

Le stagioni dello Spirito

Riflessioni sulla spiritualità vincenziana nel mondo di oggi

Published by CLV-Edizioni Vincenziane, Rome, Italy, 1999 (230 pages)

This is the Italian translation, by Stefano Angiuli, C.M., with the collaboration of Carlo Braga, C.M., of Fr. Maloney's third book which appeared under the title, *Seasons in Spirituality. Reflection on Vincen-*

tian Spirituality in Today's World (published by New City Press, New York, 1997). You will find a description of the book in *Vincentiana*, 1997/6, p. 503.

ANTONIO M. SICARI

Santi nella Carità

Figli, discipoli, amici di Vincenzo de' Paoli

Introduction by Giovanni Burdese, C.M.

Co-Published by CLV-Edizioni Vincenziane and Jaca Book,
Milan, Italy, 1999 (229 pages)

The *Saints in Charity* are those who exalted in this life and works the figure of the Redeemer in the attitude of mercy. Those described in this book do not comprise an exhaustive list of the sons/daughters, disciples, and friends of St. Vincent, but are simply some figures whom the author has particularly studied.

One finds a chapter on St. Vincent; then two chapters on his daughters: St. Louise de Marillac and St. Catherine Labouré; then presentations on four of his disciples: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Blessed Frederick Ozanam, St. Maria Crucified of Rosa, and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati; and finally the portraits of four of his friends: St. Francis de Sales, St. Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo, St. John Bosco, and Blessed Luigi Orione.

COLLECTION

Ozanam

Mobilização dos Leigos

Coleção Vicentina 11

Published by Gráfica Vicentina Ltda. - Editora, 1998 (112 pages)

This little book, produced by the Metropolitan Council of Curitiba of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, brings together diverse studies presenting different aspects of the figure of Frederick Ozanam. It highlights this layman who lived his baptism to the full and drew from St. Vincent as his source, and who provokes us to put ourselves at the service of the poor in an action of evangelization and social promotion.

SIMÃO VALENCIA, C.M., AND FIVE COLLABORATORS

Manual de Espiritualidade Vicentina

Coleção Vicentina 12

Published by Gráfica Vicentina Ltda. - Editora, 1998 (176 pages)

This is a "Collection of documents for Vincentian prayer" which was made by the three CM Provinces of Brazil in response to the request of the Superior General and the Commission on Prayer. One finds Vincentian prayers, prayers of St. Vincent, texts for meditation, proposals for the Liturgy of the Hours and hymns in honor of St. Vincent.

Informationen zur vinzentinischen Caritas

Published by St. Vincent de Paul Society of Germany

(Blumenstrasse, 20 - 50670 Köln - Germany)

"Informationen zur vinzentinischen Caritas" is a series of booklets. Consisting of only 16 to 20 pages, each number deals with a certain subject, for instance: Vincentian care for elderly people, Frederick Ozanam, Charity and Witnessing. The booklets are written in a clear way and they are certainly a great help in living the Vincentian spirit, not only for the members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, but for all members of the Vincentian Family.

Two Vincentian CD-ROMs

- **Computerized edition of Vincentian Writings**, by Claude Lautissier, C.M., Maison-Mère, Paris, France, 1998.

One finds here: in French, the writings of St. Vincent and St. Louise, various biographies, the normative texts of the C.M. and D.C.'s, various documents from the origins and from the 17th century, modern Vincentian studies and Vincentian bibliographies in various languages. He also includes some texts in English: a large part of the works of St. Vincent, Abelly, etc.; and some texts in Spanish: the works of St. Vincent and St. Louise, etc. Finally, he also incorporates an important collection of photos and engravings.

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One finds here in Spanish: the writings of St. Vincent and St. Louise, the C.M. Constitutions in Latin and Spanish, and Abelly.

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